



## FOOD & NUTRITION SERVICES

**April 20, 2023**

### **Paid Lunch Equity: Guidance for School Year 2023-2024**

#### **Guidance for Paid Lunch Pricing for SY 2023-2024**

SP 06-2023, CACFP 05-2023, SFSP 02-2023, Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023: Effect on Child Nutrition Programs, published on March 3, 2023, announced that in Section 752 of Division A of the Appropriations Act, enacted on December 29, 2022, Congress provides an exception to the PLE requirements for SY 2023-2024. It stated that only SFAs that had a negative balance in the nonprofit school food service account as of June 30, 2022, shall be required to establish prices for paid lunches according to the PLE provisions in Section 12(p) of the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act, 42 U.S.C. 1760(p) and implemented in National School Lunch Program regulations at 7 CFR 210.14(e). Therefore, the guidance that follows is separated into two categories: SFAs that qualify for the exemption and SFAs that do not qualify for the exemption.

#### **SFAs Qualifying for the SY 2023-2024 PLE Exemption**

For SY 2023-2024, SFAs with a positive or zero balance in the nonprofit school food service account as of June 30, 2022, are exempt from PLE pricing requirements found at 7 CFR 210.14(e).

Because the Appropriations Act affects one school year only, FNS recommends that State agencies maintain documentation that includes which SFAs are using the PLE exemption for SY 2023-2024 in order to demonstrate State agency oversight of this provision. This documentation should include a record that each SFA implementing the exemption had a positive or zero balance in the nonprofit school food service account as of June 30, 2022. This record could include documents such as a financial ledger or an attestation provided by the SFA. This documentation may be reviewed by FNS upon request.

While not required, exempt SFAs may still use the PLE tool to complete the steps necessary to determine their target SY 2023-2024 paid lunch price, consistent with Program regulations at 7 CFR 210.14(e), and adjust their paid lunch prices accordingly. Please note, the SY 2023-2024 PLE tool and instructions will be provided in a separate communication.

#### **SFAs Not Qualifying for the SY 2023-2024 PLE Exemption**

SFAs that had a negative balance in the nonprofit school food service account as of June 30, 2022, must follow PLE requirements according to 7 CFR 210.14(e) when establishing their paid lunch prices for SY 2023-2024. SFAs may use the forthcoming SY 2023-2024 PLE tool, or an equivalent procedure, to determine their required paid lunch prices.

**In the PLE tool, or via the equivalent procedure, SFAs may use the prices they last charged students as the basis for their SY 2023-2024 paid lunch price calculation, even if those prices were charged during a year the SFA was not required to comply with PLE requirements.** For example, SFAs that received flexibility under the PLE waiver during SY 2022-2023 or that were exempt based on the FY 2022 Appropriations Act<sup>2</sup> may use prices charged during SY 2022-2023 to determine their PLE requirement for SY 2023-2024.

If an SFA did not charge for meals during SY 2022-2023, such as an SFA that operated the Community Eligibility Provision, Provisions 2 or 3, or a State funded non-pricing option and is returning to standard counting and claiming in SY 2023-2024, it may use the most recent paid lunch price data as the basis for its SY 2023-2024 paid lunch calculation. If an SFA is unable to find documentation of the last paid meal price charged to students, then it must follow FNS guidance for new schools found in [Guidance on Paid Lunch Equity and Revenue from Nonprogram Foods | Food and Nutrition Service \(usda.gov\)](#).

Consistent with 7 CFR 210.14(e)(4)(i), **SFAs are not required to raise their paid lunch price by more than 10 cents for SY 2023-2024 from the last year they charged for paid lunches.** SFAs can still choose to raise the price by more than 10 cents.

### **Reporting**

As a reminder, while SFAs that meet the Appropriations Act's criteria are exempt from the PLE pricing requirements, all State agencies and SFAs must continue to report paid lunch prices as required in regulations at 7 CFR 210.14(e)(7) for SY 2023-2024.

## **Jefferson County Students Taste-Test School Lunch**

A recent "Flavor Fest Taste Test" was held at Woodridge Middle School in High Ridge. It was the first in the St. Louis region where students could sample and vote for next year's cafeteria offerings.

On a scale of yucky to amazing, most students gave high marks to their new lunch menu options. Vendors gave out samples of breakfast, lunch and snack options including mango, peach and banana smoothies, four-cheese enchiladas, and chili-lime watermelon raisins. Students then rated the food items 1 (yucky), 2 (meh), 3 (it's OK), 4 (pretty tasty) or 5 (amazing).

School district administrators and the food service company will compile the taste test results and add the most popular items to cafeteria menus in the fall.

While students can fill out surveys and offer feedback on cafeteria food throughout the year, this was the first opportunity to sample potential new menus.

[Click here to read the full article and see additional pictures.](#)

**Sixth grade students try a smoothie sample that might end up on next year's lunch menu.**



**Roasted edamame shaker bowl samples are made before the beginning of a 'Flavor Fest' held at Woodridge Middle School in High Ridge on Friday, April 14, 2023**



## **Summer Meals - Summer 2023**

The end of the school year is quickly approaching, and with that, many of you are beginning preparations for the operation of a summer meal service. Meals in the summer can be

served via Seamless Summer Option (SSO), Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) - through DHSS, or the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). SSO and SFSP are reserved for sites that qualify based on area eligibility – claiming all meals served at the free rate. Sites that do not meet this criteria would be eligible to operate NSLP during a summer school program – claiming meals based on the individual eligibility of the child, or SSO with documentation of at least 50% of enrolled students being eligible for free or reduced price meals – claiming only those children that are eligible for free or reduced price meals.

Although we are going to see operation of these programs return to normal, there will be an additional flexibility available for those that qualify, and wish to participate. For summer 2023, LEAs can provide non-congregate summer meals in rural areas that do not have a congregate meal service. If the rural area meets the definition of an 'area in which poor economic conditions exist (area eligible), meals for all children may be claimed for reimbursement at the free rate. If the rural area does not meet this definition, only the meals served to children who are eligible for free or reduced price meals under the NSLP or SBP may be claimed. If the site does not meet the definition of a rural site, non-congregate feeding is not an option. Please see the [map](#) for rural vs urban determined areas.

If you are interested in the option of operating a summer meal program, and would like to learn more about the options available to you this coming summer, please plan to attend the webinar being held on **April 25, 2023 from 1:00-2:00**. During this webinar we will discuss SFSP vs SSO, area eligibility, site type, SSO review information, and the newly available non-congregate option. The webinar will be hosted by DESE and cohosted by DHSS.

The due date for completion of your application for operation of SSO is due by **May 1, 2023**.



**This is what MO Beef Kids had to say about Kirbyville R-VII!**



“Food Service Director, Patti Turner, is a passionate supporter of beefing up school lunches. Take a look at this delicious brisket enjoyed by Kirbyville Middle School! We are so excited that students are enjoying beef and its 10 essential nutrients!”



## Reminders and Important Information

### **Free or Low-Cost Internet Services Available to All Households with Kids at Schools Participating in the Community Eligibility Provision**

This is a reminder the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law created the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) to lower internet costs. The ACP provides eligible households a discount of up to \$30 per month off their internet bills, as well as a one-time discount of up to \$100 off an eligible connected device like a laptop, desktop computer, or tablet. In many cases, households can get high-speed internet without paying a dime by choosing a fully covered internet plan.

On Aug. 8, 2022, the Food and Nutrition Service published an announcement to promote participation in the ACP. This letter is a reminder that a household is eligible to participate in the ACP if a child in the household receives free or reduced-price school meals. Therefore, every household with a child attending a school participating in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) of the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program is eligible for ACP benefits.

Households can learn more and apply for the ACP at [GetInternet.gov](https://www.getinternet.gov).

---

### **Meal Counts and Claiming**

We recently added a new page on the DESE, Food and Nutrition Services website in the Quick Links Box titled [Meal Counts and Claims](#). Here you will have easy access to the Claim Processing Instructions, Meal Counting and Claiming Presentation, Daily Participation Record, 60 Day Claim Submission Deadlines, Late Claim Policy and reminders all in one location!

Administrative Professionals Day is Wednesday, April 26!

*Happy* Administrative  
Professionals Day

Thank you to all the  
Administrative Professionals  
and Food Service Staff in  
Missouri School Districts!

You are appreciated!

- DESE, Food and Nutrition Services



The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, national origin, age, veteran status, mental or physical disability, or any other basis prohibited by statute in its programs and activities. Inquiries related to department programs and to the location of services, activities, and facilities that are accessible by persons with disabilities may be directed to the Jefferson State Office Building, Director of Civil Rights Compliance and MOA Coordinator (Title VI/Title VII/Title IX/504/ADA/ADAAA/Age Act/GINA/USDA Title VI), 5th Floor, 205 Jefferson Street, P.O. Box 480, Jefferson City, MO 65102-0480; telephone number 573-526-4757 or TTY 800-735-2966; email [civilrights@dese.mo.gov](mailto:civilrights@dese.mo.gov).

This email was sent to

Please add to your address book to ensure our emails reach your inbox! If you'd rather not receive emails:  
[Unsubscribe](#) | [Report Spam](#)

© Missouri Department of Elementary & Secondary Education, 205 Jefferson Street, Jefferson City, MO 65101